# Stage 4 History: The Black Death in Asia, Europe and Africa



This resource has been designed to support teachers by providing a range of tasks based on syllabus content. Tasks can be incorporated into context driven teaching and learning programs in full or can be used to supplement existing programs. All content is textbook non-specific to ensure equity.

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## Key inquiry questions

* How did societies change from the end of the ancient period to the beginning of the modern age?
* What key beliefs and values emerged and how did they influence societies?
* What were the causes and effects of contact between societies in this period?
* Which significant people, groups, and ideas from this period have influenced the world today?

## Outcomes

A student:

* **HT4-2** describes major periods of historical time and sequences events, people, and societies from the past
* **HT4-3** describes and assesses the motives and actions of past individuals and groups in the context of past societies
* **HT4-4** describes and explains the causes and effects of events and developments of past societies over time
* **HT4-6** uses evidence from sources to support historical narratives and explanations
* **HT4-7** identifies and describes different contexts, perspectives, and interpretations of the past
* **HT4-10** selects and uses appropriate oral, written, visual, and digital forms to communicate about the past
* **Related Life Skills outcomes**: HTLS-2, HTLS-3, HTLS-4, HTLS-5, HTLS-6, HTLS-8, HTLS-9, HTLS-13.

Outcomes and other elements of syllabus references in this document are from [the [History K-10 Syllabus](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/learning-areas/hsie/history-k-10)](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/learning-areas/hsie/history-k-10) © 2012 NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales.

**Note:** Given the current context of Covid-19, consideration should be given to the impact on students when covering this topic.

## Historical concepts

* **Continuity and change:** some aspects of a society, in the event of a development, changes over time or remains the same
* **Cause and effect:** events, decisions, and developments in the past that produce later actions, results, or effects
* **Perspectives**: people from the past may have had different views shaped by their different experiences
* **Empathetic understanding**: the ability to understand another’s point of view, way of life and decisions made in a different period of time or society
* **Significance:** the importance of an event, development, group, or individual, and their impact on their times or later periods
* **Contestability:** how historians may dispute a particular interpretation of an historical source, historical event, or issue

### Historical skills

* **Comprehension**: chronology, terms, and concepts
* read and understand historical texts
* sequence historical events and periods **(ACHHS205, ACHHS148)**
* use historical terms and concepts **(ACHHS206, ACHHS149).**
* **Analysis and use of sources**
* identify the origin and purpose of primary and secondary sources **(ACHHS209, ACHHS152)**
* locate, select and use information from a range of sources as evidence **(ACHHS210, ACHHS153).**
* draw conclusions about the usefulness of sources **(ACHHS211, ACHHS154)**
* **Perspectives and interpretations**
* identify and describe different perspectives of participants in a particular historical context **(ACHHS212, ACHHS155).**
* **Empathetic understanding**
* interpret history within the context of the actions, attitudes and motives of people in the context of the past **(ACHHS212, ACHHS155).**
* **Research**
* ask a range of questions about the past to inform an historical inquiry **(ACHHS207, ACHHS150)**
* identify and locate a range of relevant sources, using ICT and other methods **(ACHHS208, ACHHS151)**
* use a range of communication forms and technologies.
* **Explanation and communication**
* develop historical texts, particularly explanations and historical arguments that use evidence from a range of sources **(ACHHS213, ACHHS156)**
* elect and use a range of communication forms (oral, graphic, written and digital) to communicate effectively about the past **(ACHHS214, ACHHS157).**

## Learning sequence 1: Everyday life in a medieval village

### Content

Living conditions and religious beliefs in the 14th century, including life expectancy, medical knowledge and beliefs about the power of God **(ACDSEH015).**

Students:

* locate the extent of human settlements in 14th-century Asia, Europe and Africa
* describe the everyday life of men, women and children in the 14th century and life expectancy at this time
* describe what doctors understood about diseases and their treatment in this period
* outline what European people believed about religion and the power of God in this period.

### Extent of human settlements

In small groups, access [A Fascinating Map of Medieval Trade Routes](https://www.visualcapitalist.com/medieval-trade-route-map/) and complete the following:

* What do you notice about the map? What surprises you about it?
* What are the majority of the main cities (large red dots) located on or near?
* Why would this be the case?

### Everyday life and life expectancy

In pairs, use [Jobs in the Middle Ages](https://www.medievalists.net/2014/06/jobs-middle-ages/) to complete Table 1 for each of the 20 jobs listed. The first one has been completed for you as an example.

Table – Hygiene and safety in medieval jobs

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Job | Description of hygiene or safety concern |
| Butcher | No refrigeration |
|  |  |

**Note:** Set up the following activity as a series of stations for each role in society with a variety of sources that students use to complete Table 2. Some suggested sources you could use include:

* peasants – [Laurent d’Orleans, *La Somme le Roi*](https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/illustration-of-prowess-idleness-david-labour-from-laurent-dorleanss-la-somme-le-roi)
* peasants – [Queen Mary Psalter](https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-queen-mary-psalter)
* peasants – [Women in the Village Economy](https://spartacus-educational.com/MEDwomen.htm)
* monks – [Life in a Christian Monastery, ca. 585](http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/monastery.htm)
* children – [Children's lives in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance](https://stores.renstore.com/history-and-biography/childrens-lives-in-the-middle-ages-and-the-renaissance)
* [Life in a medieval castle](http://www.castlewales.com/life.html)

Using the sources provided by your teacher, complete Table 2 with a brief explanation of the typical daily activities for each group in medieval society (including housing, clothing and food) and who the group was controlled by.

Table – Daily life in medieval society

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Role | Daily activities | Who was in charge of the group? | What do the sources reveal about daily life? |
| **Men** |  |  |  |
| Clergy |  |  |  |
| Monks |  |  |  |
| Noblemen |  |  |  |
| Peasants – men |  |  |  |
| **Women** |  |  |  |
| Noblewomen |  |  |  |
| Nuns |  |  |  |
| Peasants - women |  |  |  |
| **Children** |  |  |  |
| Noble children |  |  |  |
| Peasant children |  |  |  |

Discuss as a class the fact that many people in the medieval period were illiterate and the lower classes did not have the time or money to record details of their lives. How have historians used evidence from sources to learn what the lives of medieval people were like? Write a short response to this question.

**Note:** Provide students with access to the peasant housing section of [Lifestyle of Medieval Peasants](https://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/medieval-england/the-lifestyle-of-medieval-peasants/) for the following activities.

Using the information from your teacher and [Medieval Life,](https://www.historyonthenet.com/medieval-life-housing) complete a [PMI chart](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/551) of what peasant living conditions were like.

Read the first paragraph of [A Guide to Longevity Throughout History](https://www.verywellhealth.com/longevity-throughout-history-2224054) and write your own definition for:

* life span
* life expectancy.

Write 2 paragraphs about life expectancy in the Middle Ages, outlining the positive and negative factors that impacted life expectancy.

### Doctors and disease treatments

Source – An extract from the Book of Customs (1321), a book of court-cases brought against people in London in the Middle Ages. Taken from [Dirty Old Town?](https://www.johndclare.net/KS3/1-6-2.htm)

Next case heard by the wardmen [guards] of the city of London: the lane called Ebbegate was a right of way for all men until it was blocked by Thomas at Wytte and William de Hockele, who got together and built latrines [toilets] which stuck out from the walls of the houses. From these latrines human filth falls on the heads of the passers-by.

Source – A letter from the Dutch writer Erasmus to an English doctor (1524). Taken from [Dirty Old Town?](https://www.johndclare.net/KS3/1-6-2.htm)

Almost all the floors are made of clay and reeds from the marshes, so carelessly removed that the bottom layers sometimes remain for 20 years, keeping there below spit and vomit and urine of dogs and men, beer that has been thrown down, leftovers of fishes and filth unnameable...

It would help also if people made the council keep the streets less dirty from filth and urine.

How useful are these sources for historians investigating medieval hygiene and people’s understanding of disease?

**Note:** [Medicine in the Middle Ages](https://www.bl.uk/the-middle-ages/articles/medicine-diagnosis-and-treatment-in-the-middle-ages) could be added to the following activity as a more complex source for HPGE students to use.

Use [Medieval Doctors](https://www.medieval-life-and-times.info/medieval-life/medieval-doctors.htm) and using a [Venn diagram or T-chart](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/599) identify the differences and similarities between doctors in the Middle Ages and today.

Read [Strangest hygiene practices from the Middle Ages](https://historycollection.com/strangest-hygiene-practices-from-the-middle-ages/) and [5 of the worst smells in medieval London](https://www.historyextra.com/period/medieval/medieval-londons-worst-smells/) and add to what you wrote previously about life expectancy in the Middle Ages.

### European religion and power of God

Use [The Medieval Church](https://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/medieval-england/the-medieval-church/) and [5 Reasons Why the Medieval Church was so Powerful](https://www.historyhit.com/reasons-why-the-medieval-church-was-so-powerful/) and complete a [Think-Pair-Share](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/645) outlining what Europeans believed about God and why the medieval Church was so powerful.

Read [The role of the Church and monasteries](https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z27nqhv/revision/1) and complete a [PMI chart](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/551) on the role the Church played in medieval healthcare.

## Learning sequence 2: Causes of the Black Death

### Content

The causes and symptoms of the Black Death and the responses of different groups in society to the spread of the disease, such as the flagellants and monasteries **(ACDSEH070)**.

Students:

* describe the causes and symptoms of the Black Death.

The role of expanding trade between Europe and Asia in the Black Death, including the origin and spread of the disease **(ACDSEH069)**.

Students:

* outline the extent of trade between Europe and Asia in the 14th century
* explain how trade and travel contributed to the outbreak and spread of the Black Death.

### Causes and symptoms of the Black Death

Use [The Plague (Black Death)](https://artsandculture.google.com/story/ngWxC1b1XA0vJg) to create a flowchart showing the plague bacteria, the infection of a person and their symptoms, and modern-day treatments.

### Trade between Europe and Asia

**Note:** Divide the class into groups. Give each group one of the sections of [Trade Networks and the Black Death](https://www.oerproject.com/OER-Materials/OER-Media/PDFs/1200/Unit2/Trade-Networks-and-the-Black-Death), ‘Spread the word but cover your mouth’, the ‘Pax Mongolica’, or ‘Merchants of Death’. As a class, read the section ‘Yersinia pestis’ before completing the group activity.

Working in your group, read the text allocated by your teacher and:

* write a one-sentence summary for each paragraph
* construct a glossary of key terms and definitions.

Working in pairs, use [How did a cockatoo reach 13th century Sicily](https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/how-did-a-cockatoo-reach-13th-century-sicily) to answer the following questions:

* Why would a cockatoo have been given as a gift to the Holy Roman Emperor?
* What is a possible trade route that the cockatoo might have taken? What regions might it have travelled through?
* What does this tell us about the interconnected nature of trade in the medieval period?

### Outbreak and spread of the Black Death

Access [The History of the Plague: Every Major Epidemic (3:18)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=YTn6YIwybwM) on the origin and spread of the Black Death. As a class discuss:

* Where did the plague originate?
* Comparing the spread of previous plagues with the Black Death, what do you notice?
* What surprised you about the spread of the Black Death?

Compare the map at 2:00 in the video with [A Fascinating Map of Medieval Trade Routes](https://www.visualcapitalist.com/medieval-trade-route-map/) and write a paragraph explaining the link between trade and the spread of the plague.

**Note:** As an extension activity, visit and work through the activities in [Trade and the Black Death](https://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/trade-and-black-death).

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## Learning sequence 3: Spread, symptoms and treatments

### Content

The causes and symptoms of the Black Death and the responses of different groups in society to the spread of the disease, such as the flagellants and monasteries **(ACDSEH070).**

Students:

* use sources to identify common treatments of the disease and discuss their effectiveness
* outline responses of social groups to the spread of the disease, including flagellants and the impact on monasteries.

### Treatments

Use [Medieval Cures for the Black Death](https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1540/medieval-cures-for-the-black-death/) and Sources 3, 4, and 5 below to complete Table 3.

Table – Treatments for the plague

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Treatment | Description | How effective was it? |
| Animal cures |  |  |
| Potions and bloodletting |  |  |
| Religious cures |  |  |
| Quarantine and social distancing |  |  |

Source – Letter sent by a group of doctors from Oxford to the Lord Mayor of London (c. 1350) from [The Black Death](https://spartacus-educational.com/Black_Death.htm)

If an ulcer appears ... near the ear or the throat, take blood from the arm on that side, that is, from the vein between the thumb and the first finger... But if you have an ulcer in the groin, then open a vein in the foot between the big toe and its neighbour ... At all events, bloodletting should be carried out when the plague first strikes.

Source – *Edward IV's Plague Medicines* (c. 1480) from [The Black Death](https://spartacus-educational.com/Black_Death.htm)

A medicine for the plague ... Take an egg that is newly laid, and make a hole in either end, and blow out all that is within. And lay it to the fire and let it roast till it may be ground to powder, but do not burn it. Then take a quantity of good treacle, and mix it with chives and good ale. And then make the sick drink it for three evenings and three mornings.

Source – Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron* (c. 1360) from [The Black Death](https://spartacus-educational.com/Black_Death.htm)

Some did not shut themselves in, but went about, some carrying flowers in their hands, some fragrant herbs ... which they frequently smelled, thinking it good to comfort the brain with such odours.

Read the sections ‘How Milan Escaped the Black Death’ and ‘Immunity to the Black Death’ from [How Poland and Milan Escaped from the Black Death](https://www.thegreatcoursesdaily.com/how-poland-and-milan-escaped-from-the-black-death/)

* How was Milan different to most other Medieval European towns?
* How was the impact of the Black Death minimised in Milan?
* Source 5 is from Florence. What evidence is there that they handled the Black Death differently to the leaders of Milan?
* Were the actions of the leaders of Milan justified?

### Responses of social groups

#### Flagellants

Watch [How did people try to ‘cure’ the Plague? (Flagellants) (5:09)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hre4Oaqu1D8) and answer the following questions:

* Which religion did the flagellants follow?
* What where they attempting to do?
* Why might they have thought this would be successful?
* What was the attitude of the Catholic Church towards the flagellants?
* Were they successful in curing the plague?

Complete the following source analysis table about the flagellants.

Table – Flagellants source analysis

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Source | Describe the scene | How useful is this source to a historian studying responses to the Black Death? |
| [Flagellants in the Netherlands town of Tournai, 1349](https://www.sciencephoto.com/media/1002228/view/flagellants-in-the-netherlands-town-of-tournai-1349) (image) |  |  |
| [Flagellants during the Black Death](https://spartacus-educational.com/EXnormans10.htm#:~:text=(Source%2013)%20Woodcut%20(c.%201480)) (image) |  |  |
| [A Procession of Flagellants](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Francisco_de_Goya_y_Lucientes_025.jpg) (image) |  |  |
| Source 6 – Heinrich von Herford |  |  |

Source – Heinrich von Herford (c. 1300-1370), *Chronicon Henrici de Hervordia* from [Flagellants And The Black Death](https://historyinnumbers.com/events/black-death/flagellants/)

Each whip consisted of a stick with three knotted thongs hanging from the end. Two pieces of needle-sharp metal were run through the centre of the knots from both sides, forming a cross, the end of which extended beyond the knots for the length of a grain of wheat or less. Using these whips they beat and whipped their bare skin until their bodies were bruised and swollen and blood rained down, spattering the walls nearby. I have seen, when they whipped themselves, how sometimes those bits of metal penetrated the skin so deeply that it took more than two attempts to pull them out.

#### Monasteries

Using [Anointing of the Sick](https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anointing_of_the_Sick) and Source 7, write an explanation of the significance of allowing women to take confession instead of priests. What does this tell us about the impact of the plague?

Source 7 – Ralph of Shrewsbury, the Bishop of Bath, wrote a letter about the Black Death to all the priests in his diocese in January 1349 from [The Black Death](https://spartacus-educational.com/Black_Death.htm)

The plague ... has left many parish churches ... without parson or priest to care for their parishioners ... Therefore, to provide for the salvation of souls ... you should at once publicly command and persuade all men that, if they are on the point of death and cannot secure the services of a priest, then they should make confession to each other ... if no man is present, then even to a woman.

According to [Priests and the Black Death](https://www.medievalists.net/2015/02/priests-black-death/) what are some of the reasons that priests were so badly affected by the plague?

## Learning sequence 4: Impact of the Black Death on medieval society

### Content

The effects of the Black Death on Asian, European and African populations, and conflicting theories about the impact of the plague **(ACDSEH071)**.

Students:

* assess the impact of the Black Death on Asian, European and African societies
* using a range of sources, discuss different interpretations of the impact of the Black Death on European society.

### Impact on Asian, European and African societies

#### Antisemitism

Table – Glossary of Jewish terms

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Term | Definition |
| Jew | A follower of the religion Judaism |
| Antisemitism | Hatred of Semitic (Jewish) peoples |
| Rabbi | A Jewish religious and community leader |
| Sabbath | A holy day of rest |

Read ‘Why Jews were Less Affected’ from [The Black Death](https://www.jewishhistory.org/the-black-death/) and write a paragraph on why Jews may have been less likely to suffer from the plague.

Source 8 – The Confession of Agimet of Geneva, 1348 from [Jewish History Sourcebook: The Black Death and the Jews 1348-1349 CE](https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/jewish/1348-jewsblackdeath.asp)

Agimet the Jew was there put to the torture a little and then he was released from it. And after a long time, having been subjected again to torture a little, he confessed … (he) had been sent … to Venice to buy silks and other things. When this came to the notice of Rabbi Peyret … he said: "We have been informed that you are going to Venice to buy silk and other wares. Here I am giving you a little pouch … which contains some prepared poison … Distribute it among the wells… about Venice."

Agimet took this package full of poison and carried it with him to Venice, and when he came there he threw and scattered a portion of it into the well. He confesses also that he put some of this same poison in the well of the streets of the city of Ballet.

Read Source 8 and answer the following questions:

* What was Agimet accused of?
* How did his accusers get his confession?
* Why might medieval Christians have blamed Jewish populations for the plague?
* From whose perspective is this source written?
* Source 8 was written by a Christian who was recording the events of Agimet’s confession. How useful is this source to a historian investigating what people believed about the Black Death and Jewish people at the time?

### Asia and Africa

**Note**: Students only need to listen to the first half of the podcast episode below.

Listen to [Did the Black Death reach sub-Saharan Africa?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_TN-MGRWrOw) (22:42) and complete a [cline](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/566) assessing the impact of the Black Death on African societies.

Read the excerpt of [An Essay on the Report of the Pestilence](https://www.coursehero.com/file/p2uj7vo/The-passage-below-is-an-excerpt-from-Ibn-al-Wardis-An-Essay-on-the-Report-of-the/) and

* locate the places named by Ibn al-Wardi on a [world map](https://mapchart.net/world-advanced.html)
* describe the methods used to attempt to treat the plague
* highlight the parts of the text that indicate the severity of the plague on Middle Eastern and African societies.

Choose one of the following words describing to what extent the Black Death impacted the societies of the Middle East and Africa: maximum, monumental, considerably, largely, moderately, slightly, marginally, minimally, insignificantly, scarcely. Write a paragraph justifying your choice referring to both sources above.

### Different interpretations of the impact of the Black Death on European society

Look at the infographic ‘[The History of Pandemics](https://www.visualcapitalist.com/history-of-pandemics-deadliest/)’. The images show the deaths of various outbreaks of diseases in history. Complete a [See, Think, Wonder](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/638) using question prompts:

* What does this source tell us about the Black Death?
* What information is missing from each time period?
* What else other than the number of deaths might affect the severity of a disease outbreak?
* How useful is this infographic for a historian studying the impact of the Black Death?

**Note:** Using the statistic below, complete an [affinity diagram](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/576) with your students before the following activity. [What is an Affinity Diagram](https://asq.org/quality-resources/affinity)? may be useful as a how-to guide for your classroom.

During the plague periods, at least 30% of all Europeans died from the Black Death. Discuss how you think society might have been affected by this scale of death. Access [Digging Thornton Abbey Plague Pit (3:37)](https://youtu.be/R5bNnnR8lwk) and read [Mass Grave Shows the Black Death’s ‘Catastrophic’ Impact in Rural England](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/mass-grave-shows-catastrophic-impact-black-death-rural-england-180974219/) to answer the following:

* Why was a mass grave unusual?
* What does the mass grave tell us about the severity of the Black Death?
* How did the Black Death appear to affect this community?
* How has this discovery changed historians’ understanding of the impact of the Black Death in rural areas in England?
* How have archaeologists used technology to extend their understanding and interpretation of the past?
* What examples are there of historians using multiple sources and techniques to confirm their theories?
* How does this example demonstrate our changing understanding of the past?

Use the [Chronicle of the Black Death](https://www.bl.uk/learning/timeline/item103973.html) to identify ways in which people’s lives changed as a result of the plague.

**Note**: [Black Death Caused Medieval Women to Shrink](https://www.forbes.com/sites/kristinakillgrove/2017/11/09/how-the-black-death-caused-medieval-women-to-shrink/?sh=573b2e651c3b) is an excellent discussion around the archaeological and scientific evidence for the impact of the Black Death on European populations. It is a very complex article and would require significant modification to be accessible to most Stage 4 students. An example activity would be to split students into groups and give each group 1 or 2 paragraphs to read, look up unfamiliar terms, and write a summary of the main points. Then return as a class and reconstruct a simple version of the whole article. For additional resources related to generic vocabulary instruction, see [A guide for planning and implementing explicit vocabulary instruction](https://resources.education.nsw.gov.au/detail/V-19).

## Learning sequence 5: Short- and long-term effects

### Content

Other immediate and long-term effects of the Black Death, including labour shortages, peasant uprisings, the weakening of feudal structures, and increased social mobility **(ACDSEH072).**

Students:

* describe short-term and long-term effects of the Black Death on medieval societies
* assess the role of the Black Death in breaking down the feudal system in Europe.

### Short and long-term effects on medieval societies

**Note:** Depending on student ability, students may need guidance in synthesising the required information from the 3 sources into the table.

Use [Impacts of the Black Death](https://www.historycrunch.com/impacts-of-the-black-death.html#/), [Effects of the Black Death on Europe](https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1543/effects-of-the-black-death-on-europe/), and [What was the effect of the Black Death in England?](https://www.historyhit.com/what-was-the-impact-of-the-black-death-on-britain/) to complete Table 6 below showing the short-term impacts of the plague on different aspects of medieval society.

Table – Short-term impacts of the Black Death

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Aspect | Impacts on society |
| Death toll |  |
| Economy |  |
| Politics |  |
| Art and architecture |  |
| Women’s rights |  |

**Note:** The article in the following activity may be quite challenging; however, students can be directed to skim read to find the information that answers the question posed.

Summarise the main benefit that the author of [The Bright Side of the Black Death](https://www.americanscientist.org/article/the-bright-side-of-the-black-death) suggests was a result of the plague. You may want to use [Jamboard](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningTool/Card/593) or [Padlet](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningTool/Card/592).

Look at the first 4 columns of the graph [Life expectancy among males in the English aristocracy, who had already reached the age of 21, between 1200 and 1745](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1102957/life-expectancy-english-aristocracy/):

* Describe what happened to life expectancy between 1200 and 1550.
* What was the impact on life expectancy due to the Black Death?
* How does this graph support or contradict the suggestions made in [The Bright Side of the Black Death](https://www.americanscientist.org/article/the-bright-side-of-the-black-death) article?
* What might have been some possible causes of the drop in life expectancy after 1600?

### Breaking down of the feudal system

Use [The Black Death](https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/The-Black-Death/) to create a [concept map](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/577) showing how the plague contributed to the breaking down of the feudal system.

Access [the end of the feudal system (5:58)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ra4IwfHO_z4) and complete Table 7 about the link between factors that led to the end of feudalism and the Black Death:

Table – Black Death and collapse of the feudal system

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Factors | Impact of the Black Death | How it contributed to the collapse of the feudal system |
| Crusades |  |  |
| Peasants moving to towns |  |  |
| Religious beliefs |  |  |
| Education |  |  |

As a class, discuss to what extent the Black Death was the most significant factor leading to the end of the feudal system.

## Assessment task

**Note: W**hen using this task, ensure it is placed on the school template and follows all assessment requirements.

### **Outcomes**

* **HT4-6** uses evidence from sources to support historical narratives and explanations
* **HT4-7** identifies and describes different contexts, perspectives and interpretations of the past

### **Syllabus content**

The effects of the Black Death on Asian, European and African populations, and conflicting theories about the impact of the plague **(ACDSEH071)**.

Students:

* using a range of sources, discuss different interpretations of the impact of the Black Death on European society.

### Task

**Note:** [Economic History: The Black Plague –The Great Economic Leveler (8:31)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5ZFNZQ83oo) may be watched individually by students or as a class. Depending on student ability, it may be worthwhile to unpack and discuss each of the sources as a class.

#### Part 1: Source analysis

The Black Death was undoubtedly one of humanity’s greatest tragedies. Analyse sources 9-12 by completing Table 8.

Table – Source analysis

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Prompt | Source 9 | Source 10 | Source 11 | Source 12 |
| Describe the source. |  |  |  |  |
| When was it created? |  |  |  |  |
| What does it tell us about the impact of the Black Death? |  |  |  |  |
| How useful is this source for a historian studying the impact of the Black Death? |  |  |  |  |

Source – [Economic History: The Black Plague —The Great Economic Leveler (8:31)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5ZFNZQ83oo)

Source 10 – The Statute of Labourers Act (1351), a law passed in 1351 in England, from [Statute of Labourers Act](https://spartacus-educational.com/YALDstatute.htm)

Due to the huge number of deaths, there was a shortage of labour after the plague. As a result, workers demanded more money, but the wealthy in England were concerned that paying more would collapse the economy. So, the government passed the Statute of Labourers that limited wages to the pre-plague amount.

That every man and woman of our kingdom of England ... who is able bodied and below the age of sixty years, not living by trade nor carrying on a fixed craft, nor having of his own the means of living, or land of his own ... shall be bound to ... take only the wages ... that were paid in the twentieth year of our reign of England (1346) ...

Source 11 – Plague Doctor, 1656



["L'Habito con il quale vanno i Medici per Roma..."](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/186495001) by [The Trustees of the British Museum](https://www.britishmuseum.org/) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0)

The caption translates as: ‘The outfit in which the doctors in Rome go to medicate in defence of the infectious disease is of waxed canvas, the face with eyeglasses and the nose full of perfumes against the infection. They hold a staff because of their reduced vision and to demonstrate their operations.’

Source 12 – The Triumph of Death by Pieter Brugel the Elder, 1562



["The Triumph of Death"](https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/the-triumph-of-death/d3d82b0b-9bf2-4082-ab04-66ed53196ccc) by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, [Museo Nacional del Prado](https://www.museodelprado.es/en) is in the [Public Domain](https://wiki.creativecommons.org/Public_domain).

#### Part 2: Extended response

Write a two-paragraph response discussing the different interpretations of the impact of the Black Death on European society. In your response, refer to at least 2 of the sources provided.

Table – Assessment marking criteria

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Grade | Criteria |
| **A** | * Demonstrates outstanding knowledge of the syllabus content by explicitly and consistently addressing the question using evidence from the sources * Clearly discusses different interpretations of the past |
| **B** | * Demonstrates thorough knowledge of the syllabus content by consistently addressing the question using evidence from the sources * Discusses different interpretations of the past |
| **C** | * Demonstrates sound knowledge of the syllabus content by consistently addressing the question using some evidence from the sources * Describes different interpretations of the past |
| **D** | * Demonstrates basic knowledge of the syllabus content by addressing the question using limited evidence from the sources * Identifies different interpretations of the past |
| **E** | * Demonstrates elementary knowledge of the syllabus content by attempting to address the question * Recognises different interpretations of the past |

## References

**Links to third-party material and websites**

Please note that the provided (reading/viewing material/list/links/texts) are a suggestion only and implies no endorsement, by the New South Wales Department of Education, of any author, publisher, or book title. School principals and teachers are best placed to assess the suitability of resources that would complement the curriculum and reflect the needs and interests of their students.

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